

# newsletter

History  
OF WA  
Council

## Mapping Western Australia's History

Many people are fascinated by maps old and new. Historians are particularly attracted to them, both as a source of information and as beautiful artefacts in themselves.

As proof of this, over 60 people turned out on a fine Sunday afternoon to attend the History Council's panel discussion 'Mapping Western Australia's History' held at the State Library Theatre on 22 October. It was pleasing to note that the audience included members of the public in addition to History Council members.

The four speakers enthralled the audience as they explored the history of Western Australia from unique and creative angles.

Glen Stasiuk explained how the indigenous people of Western Australia view the landscape, showing a familiar map of Western Australia overlaid with boundaries unfamiliar to most of the white population.

Dr Phillip Playford gave new meaning to the accounts of early European explorers of the Western Australian coastline that we know from school days. His talk – 'Explorers and Shipwrecks: The early Maritime History of Western Australia' - inspired at least one audience member to rush off to the Maritime Museum in Fremantle to learn more!

Felicity Morel-Ednie Brown described her academic work tracking the early European owners of a small section of the inner Perth area.

Steve Howell from Battye Library discussed the rich resources held by the library and chose some of his favourite maps and other images as examples. Visit the useful and growing online catalogue at the State Library's website.

The afternoon ended most agreeably with wine, tasty finger food and conversation.

(More detailed account on our web page)

## History Matters

### History and Schools

Concern about the teaching of History in schools is not restricted to Australia.

The Royal Historical Society and cognate bodies in the United Kingdom are hosting a conference on 'Why History Matters' in February 2007. The conference has two simple objectives; to affirm why History is important to education and national life in the 21st century and to explore how the History curriculum can be made more relevant, so that it provides students with the knowledge, skills and understanding to help them be successful adults.

Although History is popular in UK schools and amongst the general public, (witness the number of television historians) there are signs that History's position in the UK curriculum is being weakened. The curriculum time for History is being eroded, the History course is being narrowed, there is no synoptic overview or understanding of chronology, and History is retreating before vocational subjects. History's role is also under discussion in relation to concerns with citizenship, multiculturalism and national identity. Sound familiar?

In the United States similar issues have been current for some years. Reports indicate that student ignorance and inadequate teacher training are acute problems in high schools. In 2002 a National Assessment of Educational Progress test in US History showed that 57 per cent of high school seniors scored 'below basic', while the majority of social studies teachers do not have a major or minor in History. In the post 9/11 era Americans have become worried about those who do not share so-called national values. The policy response has been the establishment of the Federal Department of Education's 'Teaching American History' grant programme, which has pumped millions into partnerships between local schools and history professionals in universities, museums and humanities organisations. The purpose of these grants is to promote the teaching of traditional American history in elementary and secondary schools as a separate academic subject.

Conferences, federal grant programmes — there's food for thought there.

Jenny Gregory, President



Len Ogilvy (left) and Glen Stasiuk (panel member) at 'Mapping Western Australia's History' in October.

## CONTACT US

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or write to:

PO Box 1619, West Perth 6872

**Deadline for next issue:**

**12<sup>th</sup> February 2007**

**Please send contributions to the Editor, Jenny Edgecombe, at the email or postal address above.**

## Meeting of the Committee

The Committee meeting held on **25th October** included the following items where the Committee:

- Heard an interesting presentation on the Digital Records Initiative, entitled 'Ensuring the Digital Record of Western Australia', from Mark Brogan, who is currently seconded to the State Records Office of Western Australia;
- Agreed to the recommendation of Treasurer Robert Mitchell that the History Council seek Recipient Gift Tax Deductible Status;
- Decided to explore the possibility of an education seminar in 2007 on how to apply for a Lotterywest community history grant.
- Noted that a second batch of questionnaires has been sent out to local councils (Manjimup to York) on 4 October 2006, as a follow-up to the 32 questionnaires sent to various councils in September 2006.
- Discussed and agreed to establishing reciprocal membership for affiliated peak bodies;
- Agreed that the History Council should encourage the City of Perth to hold a Foundation Day event annually by writing to the City of Perth Heritage Appeal;
- Heard an update on the Federal Environment & Heritage Amendment Bill 2006 and resolved to write expressing concern about the lack of a timeline for decisions by the Minister on listings, and highlighting the need for the Register of the National Estate to be maintained.
- Resolved to arrange a Christmas function in the city, in conjunction with a tour of the Treasury Building; and
- Congratulated the Events Working Party members, and in particular Margaret Hamilton, on the success of a well-attended forum, *Mapping WA*, held at the Alexander Library on 22 October.

## Battye's 50<sup>th</sup> year anniversary

On 14 December 1956 the J S Battye Library of West Australian History was opened by the Governor, Sir Douglas Kendrew. The new library was named for Dr James Sykes Battye who in 1894 at the young age of 23 came from Melbourne to take up the position of Public Librarian in charge of Western Australia's fledgling library service. Almost immediately he began a lifelong mission to collect Western Australian works and original records.

In 1945 Battye appointed as WA's first archivist, Meroula (Mollie) Lukis whose professionalism and skill was to influence the development of the archival collections, including the founding of Australia's first Oral History program.

Battye was to die in office in 1954 after 60 years of service. Although he was a controversial figure, particularly towards his latter years, the debt owed by the people of Western Australia to Dr Battye's foresight and astuteness as a collector, as well as his passion to preserve and promote our State's history, is immense.

In the 50 years since its establishment, the Battye Library has become a much loved and respected Western Australian institution and houses the most comprehensive collection of Westraliana in the world.

The Minister for Culture and the Arts will preside over a function to celebrate the Battye Library's golden jubilee on the afternoon of Thursday 14 December 2006 at the State Library of Western Australia.

## What's New on the Website?

Read a more detailed account of the October panel on Mapping Western Australia's History

[www.historycouncilwa.org.au](http://www.historycouncilwa.org.au)

## Awards and Grants

### Lotterywest Grants

**Start planning for next year's grant rounds now.**

[Trails](#) Advertised January 2007; Closing date March 2007.

[Interpretation of Cultural Heritage](#) Closing: July 2007.

[Community Events and Celebrations](#) Rolling grant rounds throughout the year. Next round closes July 2007.

[Community Histories](#) Advertised March 2007, Closing date for Expressions of Interest September 2007.

**Further details, advice and information on other types of grants:**

<http://www.lottery.wa.gov.au/asp/index.asp?pgid=390>

## Dampier Rock Art

If you would like to follow the progress of the campaign to save the ancient rock art of the Dampier Archipelago and see a listing of all media coverage check these websites:

<http://www.dampierrockart.net/Media/> and <http://www.ntwa.com.au>

Please note that these website addresses are published for the information of members and that material on them does not necessarily reflect the views of the History Council of Western Australia.



Dr Cathie Clement and Athol Farrant with Dr Phillip Playford (right), a speaker at the History Council's recent Mapping Australia function.

## ***Hindsight* History programs at your leisure**

Did you miss the interesting Oral History feature broadcast on Radio National's *Hindsight* on 12<sup>th</sup> November? All is not lost. These programs are available on the Radio National website for four weeks following the broadcasts.

<http://www.abc.net.au/rn/hindsight/default.htm>

You can listen to the audio files directly from the website, or download them to your computer or MP3 player (note the large file size probably restricts download to broadband).

The 12<sup>th</sup> November program, *The Struggle of Memory Against Forgetting*, pays special attention to the role that oral history has played in Aboriginal historiography as it charts the development of the international Oral History movement. I

Archival oral history material featured in the program relates to apartheid South Africa, the Stolen Generations in Australia, Aboriginal cattle drovers in the Northern Territory, British nuclear tests in South Australia, and working people in Edwardian England.

## **A Generation of Archives Lost Forever?**

### **Not if the State Records Office has its way...**

Anyone who has dealt with a government agency in the last twenty years will be aware that a great deal of information about government business is held in huge computer databases.

Anyone who has worked in an office during that period will also be aware of an increasing trend towards keeping most of the 'original' correspondence and business papers on computers rather than on paper files.

Did you realise that every time a new version of major software is released or new computer hardware takes the market by storm, older versions are dropping off the end of the line, so that it becomes difficult, if not impossible, to read older computer records? The same thing happens every time new storage media are taken up (think punch cards, magnetic tape, floppy disk, CDROM, DVD, Blu-Ray, HD-DVD). The records have been lost unless somebody had the foresight and funding to migrate all those old records painstakingly onto the new media.

Have you ever wondered what effect all of this will have on archives of the future? Have you wondered what 'they' are doing to make sure that there will be archives in the future?

Many archivists and other recordkeeping professionals have been concerned about this since the early 1990s, and have been working throughout that time to raise awareness within all government agencies.

In Western Australia, the 1990s view that government agencies should be responsible for their own archival computer records has been largely discarded. Although the State Records Commission has been issuing policies and guidelines to assist agencies, many agencies simply do not have the resources to put these in place, and there are other problems such as maintaining data from superseded systems and providing ongoing access for members of the public.

The Digital Records Initiative (DRI) has been undertaken by the State Records Office (SRO), State Records Commission and the Minister of Culture and the Arts. It is aimed at promoting good practice digital recordkeeping in WA Government agencies and providing an e-permanence pathway for the increasing volume of State Archives that are being created in electronic form. The eventual aim is to ensure that the state's electronic archival records are saved, safeguarded and made accessible in an orderly manner, just as the paper ones are. We will report on developments in this vital area in future issues. In the meantime, you may be interested in the SRO website:

<http://www.sro.wa.gov.au/dri/dri.asp>



## **Tour of Treasury Buildings & Christmas Sundowner at the WA Club**

**DATE:** Wednesday 29 November 2006  
**TIME:** 4pm  
**MEET:** Cathedral Avenue (opposite Cathedral entrance)  
**COST:** Tour is Free; Sundowner \$15 per head (drinks and finger food), \$20 non-members

An exclusive site tour of the Old Treasury Buildings has been arranged for History Council members. The buildings are now ready for restoration. False ceilings and partitions have been removed, leaving the original spaces visible.

**Please note** that there are four flights of stairs and long passages to be negotiated. The lifts are not in working order. The tour will take just over an hour. Comfortable flat shoes must be worn.

After the tour, please join us for our Christmas Sundowner in Gallery 101 at the WA Club, 101 St Georges Terrace (between William and Howard Streets, river side of the Terrace), 5.15 to 7.00 pm.

**Dress:** long sleeve shirt and tie for men and equivalent for women.

**RSVP essential if attending** — please contact Julia Wallis at [office@historycouncilwa.org.au](mailto:office@historycouncilwa.org.au) by c.o.b. Monday 27 November 2006.

## East Perth Cemeteries Memorial Book

Did you know that although it is known that around 10,000 burials took place at East Perth Cemeteries (1829–1924) only 800 graves have been identified? The timber markers have long gone, only the marble, slate, granite and sandstone have survived.

The National Trust (WA), which has managed the site since 1991, regularly receives requests from members of the public wishing to put plaques in the cemetery to give testimony to a burial for which no headstone remains. Such requests were often granted with the result that sometimes inappropriate modern plaques were placed amongst the stone graves of the nineteenth century. To avoid this situation and to reduce the risk of damage to historic fabric and potential archaeological evidence, the Trust recently commissioned a Memorial Book.

The Memorial Book has been especially handmade and is bound in black leather. For a small fee, families may have a page dedicated to a family member in lieu of a plaque within the cemetery. For each entry the Trust provides a copy of this beautiful calligraphied page in a presentation folder to the family.

The official launch of the Memorial Book was held on Sunday 6 August 2006. One of the first entries memorialises the grandfather of the Hon Justice Geoffrey Miller. Other early entries commemorate members of the Chester family and ancestors of Jocelyn Mitchell and Margaret Grant.



Felicity Morel-EdnieBrown, History Council Committee member and a speaker at the recent Mapping Australia panel discussion.

## MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

You can support the work of the History Council in its pledge to make history a vital part of community life in Western Australia by becoming a member.

## Events of Interest

**The Royal WA Historical Society Inc**  
**History In The City Program**  
Citiplace Conference Room,  
Top of escalator, Perth  
Railway Station. 2 pm.  
Donation of \$5.00 at the door  
includes afternoon tea.

Wed 6 Dec Bishop Brian Kyme:  
*Six Archbishops of Perth.*

**Further Information:**  
RWAHS. tel: 9386 3841  
<http://www.histwest.qit.com.au/index.htm>

## Australia on the Map 1606-2006

**Curtin Mapping Exhibition:**  
Last day 8 Dec 2006 – your last  
chance to see this exhibition as  
the year-long Australia on the  
Map celebrations draw to a close:  
<http://www.australiaonthemap.org.au/wa/wa.htm>

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Prefix First Surname

Organisation

Address

Postcode

Work Tel

Home Tel

Email

Are you/your organisation Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander

Yes  No

Please state the number of members in your organisation \_\_\_\_\_

I/we would like the following type of membership:

- Corporate Large organisations \$200 pa  
(including government agencies and universities)
- Corporate Medium organisations \$100 pa
- Corporate Professional organisations \$50 pa
- Corporate Small organisations \$30 pa
- Individual \$20 pa
- Individual Concession \$10 pa
- Donation \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Total \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Method of Payment

I have enclosed a  cheque  money order

**Make a copy of this form, complete and return it with payment to**  
History Council of Western Australia Inc, PO Box 1619, West Perth 6872

## New opening hours for National Archives

There have been changes to opening hours for the reading room at the National Archives Perth office at 1384 Berwick St in East Victoria Park.

The reading room is now open from 9.00am to 4.30pm on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday.

This change reflects a shift in researcher habits – over 84% of reference inquiries now occur through the website or remote reference service. Resources are being focused on meeting the greater demand for online access and services.

Have you explored the 15 million pages of the NAA collection material already available online through [RecordSearch](http://www.naa.gov.au/the_collecti on/recordsearch.html) ?  
[http://www.naa.gov.au/the\\_collecti on/recordsearch.html](http://www.naa.gov.au/the_collecti on/recordsearch.html)

## Publicise Your Organisation's Events

Is your organisation planning a seminar, conference or other special event likely to be of interest to History Council members?

Contact us through:  
[office@historycouncilwa.org.au](mailto:office@historycouncilwa.org.au)  
or write to:  
PO Box 1619, West Perth  
6872

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**12<sup>th</sup> February 2007**